

MEMO

115th Congress



DATE:	November 3, 2017
TO:	DY
FROM:	Martha Newell
RE:	H.R. 221 Hydrographic Surveys

DYs Statement

- Thank you Chairman Lamborn and Ranking Member Huffman for considering my bill, H.R. 221 the Hydrographic Services Improvements Amendments Act.
- I was an original cosponsor and Chairman of this committee when Rep. Jim Saxton (R-NJ) introduced the Hydrographic Services Improvements Act 1998.
- My current legislation will reauthorize the Act through 2022 and will allow NOAA to conduct and contract for hydrographic surveys around the US with a specific focus on the Arctic.
- Alaska is what makes the US an Arctic nation. My state has more coastline than any other state in this country, and we don't know what's under the surface
 - We are seeing a significant increase in vessel traffic, exploration, and resource development in our Arctic waters.
 - While hydrographic surveys are a critical part of maritime safety, economic, and environmental efforts nationwide, they are especially important in the Arctic.
- There are over 550,000 square nautical miles in the U.S. Arctic Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and it would take decades to survey even half of that space.

- NOAA has designed 38,000 miles as survey priority areas, and estimates range up to 25 years to survey just those priority areas if resources remain at their current level.
- Alaskan waters are incredibly under surveyed. Before this year, the last time the entrances and mouth to the Yukon River were surveyed was 1899.
 - This river is the most effective route to deliver food and goods to coastal and inland villages in Western Alaska, and the last on-the-ground surveys were completed the same year that gold was discovered in Nome.
- Another region, Port Clarence, is currently being surveyed to update areas that have been avoided by shipping traffic because they don't know how deep the water is.
 - This Port has been identified as a major development priority for Alaska and the Arctic, but there are still areas that ships avoid because we don't have accurate depth measurements.
- Outside of Alaska, we have areas like Puget Sound in Washington that desperately needs updated survey data for the deep draft vessel traffic transiting to Seattle and Tacoma.
- Around Houston, Texas, there are old shipwrecks and obstructions with their positions labeled as "approximate" on navigation charts. This is a real hazard to the oil tankers that travel to and from Port Houston.
- Authorization for The Hydrographic Services Improvement Act expired in 2012. My bill would reauthorize the program through 2022, and authorizes the use of appropriated funds to collect data and conduct surveys in the Arctic.
- I thank the committee for considering this legislation.